

# VBE Guidelines: **School Support for Trans\* and Gender Nonconforming Students**





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The Vancouver Board of Education would like to acknowledge that we live and work on the traditional lands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Coast Salish peoples.

## INTRODUCTION

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In June 2014, the VBE approved the revised policy and regulations, ACB: Sexual and Gender Identities, and Regulations ACB - R - 1: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities Regulations. The updated policy and regulations reflect current best practice for supporting the well-being and academic success of LGBTTTQ+ students at school.

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Findings from *Every Class in Every School First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools* (Taylor et al. 2011) indicate that trans and gender nonconforming students do not feel safe and welcome at school:

- 90% of trans youth hear transphobic comments daily or weekly from other students; almost a quarter (23%) of trans students reported hearing teachers use transphobic language daily or weekly.
- Almost three-quarters (74%) of trans students report being verbally harassed about their gender expression.
- One-quarter (25%) of trans students reported having been physically harassed.
- 44% of trans students reported being likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe, and 15% reported having skipped more than 10 days because of feeling unsafe at school.

VBE staff share a commitment to ensuring the safety and inclusion of all students in our schools. These guidelines were developed to support schools in the implementation of practices and strategies that promote the respect, dignity, and equity of students who are trans\* (trans, transgender, and gender non-binary), and gender nonconforming (gender expansive and gender creative).

### SCHOOL STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Every person plays an important role and has a responsibility to model respect, understanding, and support for diversity in the working and learning environment. Staff are responsible for:

- Respecting the rights of all students with regard to their gender identity and gender expression.
- Ensuring the safety of all students by making expectations for language and behaviour explicit, and directly addressing discrimination and harassment.
- Educating themselves about gender-inclusive school practices.
- Utilizing classroom curriculum and resources that positively and accurately represents trans\* and gender nonconforming people, and improve understanding of diverse gender identities and gender expressions.

“The most important task for schools is to provide a safe, nurturing, non-violent atmosphere in which to learn, to grow, and to develop for all students, inclusive of all gender identities.”

*Public Health Agency of Canada*

## GENDER IDENTITY AND GENDER EXPRESSION

According to *Being Safe, Being Me: The Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey* (Saewyc et al. 2015), trans youth benefit significantly from living in their felt gender on a full-time basis, and also from adult support:

- Nearly two-thirds of trans youth reported self-harm in the past year; a similar number reported serious thoughts of suicide; and more than 1 in 3 had attempted suicide.
- Youth who live in their felt gender full time were 50% more likely to report good or excellent mental health.
- Trans youth generally reported low connectedness to school, but those who reported higher school connectedness were twice as likely to report having good mental health.
- Trans youth who had supportive adults were four times more likely to report good or excellent mental health, and were far less likely to have considered suicide.

Gender identity is a person's internal sense of being a boy/man, girl/woman, both, neither, or somewhere in between. Gender identity refers to internal experience that cannot be determined by others. How you present or show your gender to the world is known as gender expression. Gender identity and gender expression are best understood as spectrums, and may be fluid for some people.

For most people, their gender identity is consistent with the gender they were assigned at birth. The term for this experience is cisgender. People who are transgender, on other hand, have a gender identity that differs from their assigned gender at birth. This includes people whose gender identity is fluid and falls outside the gender binary of girl/woman and boy/man. People with this experience often refer to themselves as having a non-binary gender, or being genderqueer.

Finally, people who are gender nonconforming have a gender expression that differs from what is considered "the norm" or expected for their assigned or "perceived" gender in a given culture. This can include people who are cisgender.

Note: The language that we use to talk about gender identity and gender expression evolves over time and people may use different terms to describe themselves other than what is offered in this document.

(Adapted from Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2014)

### **ACB-R-1, G, 1**

#### **Consultation**

School staff are encouraged to consult with district staff to review best practices for supporting trans\* students.

### **ACB-R-1, G, 10**

#### **Resolving Conflict**

Disputes will be resolved in a manner that involves the trans\* student and an adult ally (teacher, service provider, or parent/guardian) in the decision-making process to maximize inclusiveness.

### **ACB-R-1, G, 9**

#### **Student Transfers**

Schools will aim to keep trans\* students at their original school site, unless it is a student's wish to transfer. Should the student wish to transfer, it is not necessary to disclose the student's gender identity and/or gender expression as the reason for transfer.

## **GUIDELINES**

### **1. Support the Student's Process: Planning and Decision-Making**

Trans\* and gender nonconforming students are unique and have varying needs. Requests for support are to be fulfilled on a case-by-case basis by a School Support Team made up of an administrator, school counsellor, and staff members with whom the student feels comfortable. Supports that work for one student may not work for another and additional accommodations not included in these guidelines may be necessary to address a student's particular concerns.

The School Support Team:

- Consults with the district Anti-Homophobia and Diversity Counsellor to plan supports and accommodations.
- Respects the student's right to self-identification with regard to their gender identity and expression.
- Listens to the needs and concerns of the student to identify supports.
- Involves the student in a collaborative decision-making process.
- Includes the student and their adult allies if problems arise to resolve conflicts over the implementation of the policy and regulations.
- Prevents and addresses discrimination and harassment to ensure a safe and welcoming school climate.

School transfer is not the first choice for supporting the safety of trans\* and gender nonconforming students. Complaints of discrimination and harassment should be addressed effectively to ensure a safe and welcoming school climate. The School Support Team should consult with the district Anti-Homophobia and Diversity Mentor Counsellor to develop a plan to address safety concerns.

### Confidentiality and Privacy

- a. A student's trans\* status, legal name, or gender assigned at birth may constitute confidential personal information that will be kept confidential unless its disclosure is legally required, or unless the student or the student's parent(s)/guardian have given authorization.
- b. In situations where school staff or administrators are required by law to use or to report a trans\* student's legal name or sex, such as for purposes of data collection, school staff and administrators will adopt practices to avoid the inadvertent disclosure of such information.
- c. Students' rights to discuss and express their gender identity and/or gender expression openly and to decide when, with whom, and how much private information to share will be respected.

## 2. Ensure the Student's Confidentiality and Privacy

Gender identity is personal and confidential information, and it is up to the student to decide when and with whom they will share this information. Respect the student's privacy by not asking personal questions about their gender identity, sexual orientation, transition, medical care, etc.

In many cases, trans\* students have not made an official change to their name and gender identity on MyED BC and school records (please refer to Section 4, p. 8). Additionally, not all students are "out" (disclosed their trans\* status) in their school community. To ensure the student's confidentiality and privacy:

- a. Speak privately with any student if you require clarification regarding a discrepancy between information provided on MyED BC and the name and/or gender identity the student uses.
- b. Provide employees-on-call (EOCs) with an up-to-date class list that includes the name and pronouns used by trans\* students and inform on-call staff that they may see inaccurate student information on MyED BC. It is suggested that schools include a memo with the EOC folder providing general information about protecting the confidentiality of trans\* students, and respecting gender nonconforming students. Do not identify specific students.
- c. Create school documents (i.e. class lists, timestables, posted lists, report cards, award certificates, etc.) that include the name and/or gender identity that the student uses, if different from their legal name and gender identity (see Section 4, p. 8). For some documents the gender field can be removed.
- d. Update school photos used for library cards, GO cards and in the yearbook to reflect the students' gender identity and/or gender expression.
- e. Keep documents with the student's legal name and sex designation private and confidential (i.e. 1701 enrolment reporting, TRAX reporting, PEN reports, student transcripts and permanent student records, etc.).

Some trans\* students may not be "out" beyond the school community, and some gender-nonconforming students may choose to express their gender differently outside of school. When communicating with a parent/guardian, use the student's legal name and gender identity unless you have permission otherwise. This includes phone calls, and letters and forms sent home.

## Names and Pronouns

Trans\* students will be addressed by the names and pronouns they prefer to use.

### 3. Use the Student's Name(s) and Pronoun(s)

Students have the right to self-identification, and to decide the name(s) and pronoun(s) by which they are addressed. This includes students who have not made official changes to their name and gender identity on MyED BC and official records.

Some trans\* students are gender non-binary and do not identify as male or female. These students may use gender-neutral pronouns, such as they/them/their and xe/xem/xyr (pronounced “zee”, “zem”, “zer”).

In your role as school staff:

- Prevent and address discrimination and harassment to ensure a safe and welcoming school climate.
- Model the consistent use of trans\* students' names and pronouns.
- Recognize that it takes courage for a student to request that staff use their pronoun and name, and respond respectfully.
- If you make a mistake, offer a brief apology that does not draw attention to the student, and correct the use of their pronoun and/or name.
- Recognize that not all students are “out” beyond their school community. Determine from the student the appropriate name and pronoun to use before contacting a student's home.

Deliberate and persistent refusal to acknowledge and respect a student's gender identity by not using their correct name(s) and pronoun(s) is a form of discrimination.

“Be cognizant of the language being used in the classroom and during school events. For example, texts and lessons that use the ‘she/he’ binary ignore the range of gender identities... By using more inclusive language, such as ‘they’ instead of ‘she’ or ‘he’, not only will transgender youth feel more supported but it will also help to educate the entire school community about gender diversity.”

*Public Health Agency of Canada*



## Official Records and Student Information

- a. Whenever possible and permitted by law, requests made by a student, or the parent/guardian, to change the student's official record to reflect their preferred name and/or gender identity will be accommodated.
- b. Whenever possible, at the request of a student or a student's parent(s)/guardian, the student's preferred name and/or gender identity will be included on class lists, timetables, student files, identification cards, etc.
- c. Unless the student or the student's parent/guardian has specified otherwise, communications between school and home shall use a student's legal name and the pronoun corresponding to the student's gender assigned at birth.

## 4. Make Changes to Student Information in MyED BC and Official Records Whenever Possible

Upon student request, student information, class lists, timetables, identification cards, and report cards can be updated to reflect the student's name and gender identity according to the following guidelines. Graduation diplomas and transcripts are provided by the Ministry of Education, and require the use of legal name. Gender identity is not included on these documents.

### MyED BC:

- A first name can be added or changed in the 'Usual First Name' field.
- Legal name(s) can be changed by submitting a legal change of name certificate.
- Gender identity can be changed by submitting an updated Birth Certificate, Provincial Driver's License, Passport, BC Services Card, or a letter from a physician or psychologist affirming the student is in the process of transitioning.
- Gender identity can be changed temporarily to print a class list or timetable without documentation by:
  - i) selecting the student's gender identity (M/F),
  - ii) printing the class list or times table and then,
  - iii) resetting the legal gender identity.

*(This process must be followed each time a class list is printed. At present M/F are the only choices and there is no option to leave an individual's gender blank.)*

### Report cards:

- Students can request the use of their first name reported in the 'Usual First Name' field.
- Gender identity is not included.

### GO cards and library cards:

- Gender identity is not included.

Ensure student confidentiality and privacy by adopting practices to avoid inadvertent disclosure of the student's gender identity or expression when required to use or report a trans\* or gender nonconforming student's legal name and sex designation. When communicating with parents/guardians, use the trans\* student's legal name unless you have permission otherwise.



## Dress

Students have the right to dress in a manner consistent with their gender identity or gender expression. This includes students who may dress in a manner that is not consistent with societal expectations of masculinity/femininity.

## 5. Respect the Student's Right to Express Their Gender Identity Through Clothes and Appearance

All students have the right to dress in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity. According to a recent Canadian study, trans\* youth who live in their felt gender full time are 50% more likely to report good or excellent mental health (Saewyc et al., 2015).

Students who are gender nonconforming may dress in clothing that differs from stereotypic expectations for their perceived or assigned gender identity. For example, a male student may feel more comfortable dressing in "feminine" clothing, and a female student may feel more comfortable wearing "masculine" clothing. Other gender nonconforming students may dress in a combination of "feminine" and "masculine" clothing.

Create a supportive school environment for trans\* and gender nonconforming students by respecting their clothing and appearance. You can model respectful behaviour by not asking invasive questions or making jokes about students' clothing, hairstyle, etc.

"Though the language of gender identity is contemporary, people who have challenged the stereotypical categories of gender have existed for much of human history. Gender variant and [transgender] individuals have existed in many cultures."

*Public Health Agency of Canada*

## ACB-R-1, G, 6

### Sex-Segregated Activities

Schools will reduce or eliminate the practice of segregating students by sex. In situations where students are segregated by sex, trans\* students will have the option to be included in the group that corresponds to their gender identity.

## 6. Reduce or Eliminate Gender-segregated Activities

To maximize the successful participation of all students, reduce or eliminate gender-segregated classes, teams and groupings. Gender-inclusive learning environments support gender diversity, and allow all students to participate and express themselves fully.

Gender-inclusive practices include, but are not limited to:

- Creating mixed gender P.E. classes. Many secondary schools schedule co-ed P.E. classes from grade 8-12.
- Using ‘all genders’ groupings and teams. Educators can use pinnies, or number students instead of grouping students by gender.
- Addressing your class and groups of students in non-gendered ways (avoid “boys and girls” and “ladies and gentlemen”). Some educators use, “children”, “students”, “everyone”, “Division \_\_”, or “folks”.
- Seating and lining students up randomly, not by gender.
- Giving students the opportunity to play at all centres at the primary level, so that they can dig, build, bake, and explore all activities. In the dress up centre, encourage students to pretend to be whomever they want to, irrespective of gender.
- Encouraging students to mix up their playgroups and get to know one another.
- Displaying posters and books, and using curriculum that depicts a range of gender presentations.

In circumstances where students must be separated by gender, trans\* students have the option to choose the group that corresponds to their gender identity, but are not required to.

When offering gender-segregated groups, use inclusive practices:

- Indicate that the group is open to all self-identified girls or boys and that trans\* students are welcome.
- Whenever possible, also offer a group that is for all genders to maximize the participation and inclusion of students.

“School policies that segregate students by gender ignore and stigmatize individuals who challenge the typical “male” or “female” notions and can cause emotional, and psychological distress for students.”

*Public Health Agency of Canada*

### Access to Physical Education and Sports

- a. Trans\* students shall be provided the same opportunities to participate in physical education as all other students, shall not be asked or required to have physical education outside of the assigned class time, and shall be permitted to participate in any sex-segregated activities in accordance with their gender identity if they so choose.
- b. Where possible, students will be permitted to participate in any sex-segregated recreational and competitive athletic activities, in accordance with their gender identity. Due to issues of disclosure and safety, some students may wish to participate in a sex-segregated activity that is not aligned with their gender identity.

## 7. Enable the Student to Participate Fully and Safely in P.E. Classes and Athletic Teams

All students have the right to participate in physical education classes and athletics teams in a safe and respectful environment. Trans\* and gender nonconforming students have the right to participate in regular P.E. classes, and students should not be asked to enroll in an online class or independent study.

Minimize gender-segregation in P.E. by creating mixed gender classes and teams. If a P.E. class or athletic activity is gender-segregated, trans\* students have the right to participate in the class or activity that corresponds with their gender identity, but are not required to.

BC School Sports has a separate policy for the inclusion of trans\* students on sports teams. Please refer to the BC School Sports Handbook 2013-2014, Section III D7: Student Athlete Gender for more information at:

[www.bcschoolsports.ca/sites/default/files/files/resources/handbooktext-web.pdf](http://www.bcschoolsports.ca/sites/default/files/files/resources/handbooktext-web.pdf)

## ACB-R-1, G, 8

### Washroom and Change Room Accessibility

- a. The use of washrooms and change rooms by trans\* students shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis with the goals of maximizing the student's social integration, ensuring the student's safety and comfort, minimizing stigmatization, and providing equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes and sports.
- b. Trans\* students shall have access to the washroom and change room that corresponds to their gender identity. Students who desire increased privacy will be provided with a reasonable alternative washroom and/or changing area. Any alternative arrangement will be provided in a way that protects the student's ability to keep their trans\* status confidential.
- c. The decision with regard to washroom and change room use shall be made in consultation with the trans\* student.
- d. The Board will strive to make available single stall gender-neutral washrooms at all school locations and worksites.

### 8. Provide Safe Access to Washroom and Change Room Facilities

All students have a right to safe washrooms and change room facilities. Trans\* and gender nonconforming students have the right to use the washroom and change room that corresponds to their gender identity.

Single-use washrooms are available to students at all school sites and are for use by any student who desires increased privacy. Use of this washroom is a matter of choice, not a requirement, and it should not be the only option available to a trans\* or gender nonconforming student due to harassment in other washrooms.

If a student would like increased privacy, a reasonable alternative change room option will be provided that protects their confidentiality. Alternative options include, but are not limited to:

- Designating a single-use washroom for use as a change room near P.E. facilities.
- Identifying a private area within the change room (such as a bathroom stall with a door).

On a case-by-case basis, the School Support Team will collaborate with the trans\* student and/or their parent/guardian to plan access to washrooms and change rooms on field trips with the goal of maximizing the student's comfort, safety and social integration.

Here are suggestions to consider when planning fieldtrips:

- When planning a fieldtrip to a pool, whenever possible, choose a location that has a universal change room available for your class to use.
- When planning a fieldtrip to a library, museum, or other venue, call ahead to find out the location of a single-use washroom. As with school sites, trans\* students have the right to use the washroom that corresponds to their gender identity but may choose to use a single-use washroom.
- When planning an overnight fieldtrip, whenever possible, choose a location that has a single-use washroom, shower and a private sleeping accommodation available for trans\* students who would like to access these options.

## CHECKLIST FOR CREATING A SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FOR TRANS\* STUDENTS REQUESTING A SOCIAL TRANSITION

- 1. Establish a Student Support Team made up of an administrator, school counsellor, and staff members with whom the student feels comfortable, and consult with the district Anti-Homophobia and Diversity Counsellor.
- 2. Meet with the student and/or their parent/guardian to discuss:
  - a) Washrooms and change rooms options. (p.12)
  - b) Participation in P.E. class and athletic activities. (p.11)
  - c) Name and gender identity changes on MyED BC and official records. (p.8)
  - d) Student confidentiality and privacy. (p.6)
  - e) The level of information to be shared with staff and students with regard to the student's name and pronoun changes.
- 3. Provide the student with information about your school's GSA or diversity club and community resources.
- 4. Plan a staff workshop to provide information about supporting trans\* and gender nonconforming students according to VBE policies and regulations. *Contact the Anti-Homophobia and Diversity Counsellor for professional development opportunities.*
- 5. With permission and in consultation with the student and/or their caregiver, inform the student's classroom teachers about the correct name(s) and pronoun(s) to use.
- 6. With permission and in consultation with the student and/or their caregiver, plan classroom workshops to inform the student's classmates about the social transition and correct name and pronoun use. *Contact the Anti-Homophobia and Diversity Counsellor to organize classroom workshops.*
- 7. Follow up with student and/or their caregiver during and after the social transition to discuss additional supports to ensure that the plan is being carried out in an affirming way.
- 8. Follow up with the student's teachers and staff members and address any concerns regarding full inclusion of the student.
- 9. Continue to include themes related to gender diversity in professional development and classroom presentations.

### References:

- Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (2014). *Guidelines for supporting transgender and gender-nonconforming students*. [http://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/Guidelines%20for%20Supporting%20Transgender%20Students\\_0.pdf](http://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/Guidelines%20for%20Supporting%20Transgender%20Students_0.pdf)
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## ACB: SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITIES

**Classification:** A: Foundations and Basic Commitments **Code:** ACB

The Board of Education (the “Board”) is committed to establishing and maintaining a safe, inclusive, equitable, and welcoming learning and working environment for all members of the school community, regardless of real or perceived sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions, which includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, Two-Spirit, queer, and those who are questioning (LGBTQQ+).

The Board will provide a safe environment, free from harassment and discrimination, while also promoting pro-active strategies and guidelines to ensure that lesbian, gay, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, bisexual and questioning students, employees and families are welcomed and included in all aspects of education and school life and treated with respect and dignity. The purpose of this policy is to define appropriate behaviours and actions in order to prevent discrimination and harassment through greater awareness of and responsiveness to their deleterious effects. This policy is also drafted to ensure that homophobic complaints are taken seriously and dealt with expeditiously and effectively through consistently applied policy and procedures. The policy will also raise awareness and improve understanding of the lives of people who identify themselves on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. By valuing diversity and respecting differences, students and staff act in accordance with the Vancouver district’s social responsibility initiative.

The Board believes that all LGBTQQ+ students, staff and families have the right to have:

- their confidentiality protected and respected;
- self-identification and determination; and
- their unique identities, families, cultures, and communities included, represented, valued, and respected within all aspects of the school environment.

The Board will promote pro-active strategies and guidelines so that all members of this diverse community are welcomed, respected, accepted and supported in every school and worksite.

The Board is committed to implementing measures that will:

- define appropriate expectations, language, behaviours and actions in order to prevent discrimination and harassment;
- ensure that complaints of discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression are taken seriously and dealt with expeditiously and effectively through consistently applied policy and procedures;
- raise awareness and improve understanding of the lives of people who identify as LGBTQQ+; and
- strive to eliminate the systemic inequities and barriers for members of the school community whose real or perceived identity is LGBTQQ+ and demonstrate accountability in leadership so that everyone is treated with fairness and respect.

DMT Responsibility: AS-LS

**Legal References:** The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; BC Human Rights Code; BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; BC School Act; BC Vital Statistic Act (pending)

**Cross References:** ACA: Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism; FB: Facilities Planning; GBAB: Employment Equity; GBCBA: Sexual Harassment; IGBA: Programs for Disabled Students; IIA: Instructional Materials; IIAE: Hate Crimes and Propaganda; JB: Equal Educational Opportunities; KLB: Public Complaints about the Curriculum/Instructional Materials

**Adopted Date:**

Monday February 16, 2004

**Revision Date:**

Jun 2014

## **ACB - R - 1: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities**

**Classification:** A; Foundations and Basic Commitments **Code:** ACB-R-1

### **A. Anti-Harassment**

The Board will strive to prevent and to provide effective procedures to respond to any language or behaviour that degrades, denigrates, labels, or stereotypes students on the basis of their real or perceived sexual and/or gender identities and/or gender expression, or that incites hatred, prejudice, discrimination or harassment on such bases.

### **B. Leadership**

The Board will consult with the Pride Advisory Committee to ensure that policy directions, priorities and implementation of programs and services are consistent with the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities policy. There will be ongoing, constructive and open dialogue with LGBTTTQ+ communities to increase co-operation and collaboration among home, school and the community.

Administrators, teachers, counsellors, and other staff and student leaders should consult with LGBTTTQ+ students and their designated support groups and take concrete actions to make schools more welcoming, inclusive and safer places.

Staff will not refer students to programs or services that attempt to change a student's sexual orientation or gender identity.

### **C. Professional Development and Training**

The Board will strive to ensure that professional development and training is provided for staff to develop the awareness, knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to:

- deliver an LGBTTTQ+ inclusive curriculum (including anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia education);
- identify and address homophobic and transphobic discriminatory attitudes and behaviours; and
- support and advocate for the needs of students whose real or perceived identity is LGBTTTQ+

### **D. Counselling and Student Support**

The Board will ensure that:

- counsellors are trained to respond competently to the needs of LGBTTTQ+ students as well as to the needs of students with LGBTTTQ+ family members;
- counsellors and staff are provided with information, from the district, on support programs or services for students and families;
- elementary and secondary schools appoint at least one staff person to be a Safe Contact who is able to act as a resource person for LGBTTTQ+ students, staff and families. (Note: School administrators will act as the Safe Contact if no one voluntarily steps forward.) School administrators will inform students and other staff about the location and availability of this contact person; and
- all secondary schools are supported in establishing and maintaining Gay or Queer/Straight Alliance clubs.



## **E. Curriculum Learning Resources**

The Board is committed to:

- ensuring that staff utilizes language and educational resources and approaches that are inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and respectful of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions;
- enabling all LGBTTTQ+ students and families to see themselves and their lives positively reflected in the curriculum, through the provision of library and other curricular resources;
- creating or acquiring developmentally appropriate, current and relevant learning resources for sexual health education that are LGBTTTQ+ inclusive; and
- providing learning resources in languages and in formats easily accessible to ELL students and their families, where possible.

## **F. Communications**

The Board will:

- acknowledge through its communication to students, staff, and the community that some students live in LGBTTTQ+ families and need to be positively recognized and included as such; and
- ensure that school forms and communications reflect the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities of students, staff and parents/guardians.

## **G. Gender Identity and Gender Expression**

To support the safety, health, and educational needs of students whose real or perceived identity is trans\*, staff shall adhere to the following practices:

### **1. Consultation**

School staff are encouraged to consult with district staff, to review best practices for supporting trans\* students.

### **2. Confidentiality and Privacy**

- a. A student's trans\* status, legal name, or gender assigned at birth may constitute confidential personal information that will be kept confidential unless its disclosure is legally required or unless the student or the student's parent(s)/guardian have given authorization.
- b. In situations where school staff or administrators are required by law to use or to report a trans\* student's legal name or sex, such as for purposes of data collection, school staff and administrators will adopt practices to avoid the inadvertent disclosure of such information.
- c. Students' rights to discuss and express their gender identity and/or gender expression openly and to decide when, with whom, and how much private information to share will be respected.

### **3. Names and Pronouns**

Trans\* students will be addressed by the names and pronouns prefer to use.

#### 4. Official Records and Student Information

- a. Whenever possible and permitted by law, requests made by a student, or the parent/guardian, to change the student's official record to reflect their preferred name and/or gender identity will be accommodated.
- b. Whenever possible, at the request of a student or of a student's parent(s)/guardian, the student's preferred name and/or gender identity will be included on class lists, timetables, student files, identification cards, etc.
- c. Unless the student or the student's parent/guardian has specified otherwise, communications between school and home shall use a student's legal name and the pronoun corresponding to the student's gender assigned at birth.

#### 5. Dress

Students have the right to dress in a manner consistent with their gender identity or gender expression. This includes students who may dress in a manner that is not consistent with societal expectations of masculinity/femininity.

#### 6. Sex-segregated Activities

Schools will reduce or eliminate the practice of segregating students by sex. In situations where students are segregated by sex, trans\* students will have the option to be included in the group that corresponds to their gender identity.

#### 7. Access to Physical Education and Sports

- a. Where possible, students will be permitted to participate in any sex-segregated recreational and competitive athletic activities, in accordance with their gender identity. Due to issues of disclosure and safety, some students may wish to participate in a sex-segregated activity that is not aligned with their gender identity.
- b. Trans\* students shall be provided the same opportunities to participate in physical education as all other students, shall not be asked or required to have physical education outside of the assigned class time, and shall be permitted to participate in any sex-segregated activities in accordance with their gender identity if they so choose.

#### 8. Washroom and Change Room Accessibility

- a. The use of washrooms and change rooms by trans\* students shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis with the goals of maximizing the student's social integration, ensuring the student's safety and comfort, minimizing stigmatization and providing equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes and sports.
- b. Trans\* students shall have access to the washroom and change room that corresponds to their gender identity. Students who desire increased privacy will be provided with a reasonable alternative washroom and/or changing area. Any alternative arrangement will be provided in a way that protects the student's ability to keep their trans\* status confidential.
- c. The decision with regard to washroom and change room use shall be made in consultation with the trans\* student.
- d. The Board will strive to make available single stall gender-neutral washrooms at all school locations and worksites.

## 9. Student Transfers

Schools will aim to keep trans\* students at their original school site, unless it is a student's wish to transfer. Should the student wish to transfer, it is not necessary to disclose the student's gender identity and/or gender expression as the reason for transfer.

## 10. Resolving Conflict

Disputes will be resolved in a manner that involves the trans\* student and an adult ally (teacher, service provider, parent/guardian) in the decision-making process to maximize inclusiveness.

DMT Responsibility: AS-LS

## Glossary

**Asexual:** A person who is not sexually attracted to any gender or sex. Asexual people may still be romantically attracted to people of a variety of genders and sexualities and have romantic, non- sexual relationships.

**Bisexual:** A person who is attracted to both women and men.

**Gay:** A person who is attracted to someone of the same sex and/or gender as themselves. This word can be applied to all genders of relationships, but has primarily been used in reference to men.

**Gender:** A socially constructed concept of identity based on roles, behaviours, activities, and appearance such as masculine, feminine, androgynous, etc.

**Gender expression:** The ways a person presents their sense of gender to others (for example, through clothes, hairstyle, mannerisms, etc.).

**Gender identity:** A person's internal sense of being a man, a woman, genderqueer etc. This is not the same thing as a person's biological sex, and may not be consistent with how they are perceived by others.

**Gender nonconforming:** A term that often refers to children who express gender in ways that differs from societal expectations of the sex and gender assigned to them at birth. For the purposes of this policy and accompanying regulations gender nonconforming children are included under the term trans\*.

**Homophobia:** The fear, ignorance and mistreatment of people who are, or are perceived to be, lesbian, gay or bisexual. This often leads to bias, discrimination, hatred, harassment and violation of the human rights of lesbian, gay or bisexual people. Homophobic bullying can also be targeted against any individual, regardless of perceived sexual orientation.

**Intersex:** Refers to people whose reproductive or sexual anatomy is not easily defined as male or female. There are a variety of ways someone can be intersex, ranging from having ambiguous genitalia to having mixture of XX and XY chromosomes. Intersex individuals have historically been mistreated in North American society (i.e. being forced to have "corrective" genital surgeries as infants). The term Disorders of Sexual Development is being used increasingly amongst medical professionals in reference to intersex conditions, however, this term has not been fully adopted by intersex communities at the time this policy is being written. The word hermaphrodite was historically used to describe intersex individuals, however, this term is considered highly offensive.

**Lesbian:** A woman who is attracted to other women.

**LGBTQT+:** An acronym that in this case stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, Two-Spirit, and queer/questioning. There is a wide range of other terms often included in this acronym (often referred to by queer communities as “the alphabet soup”) such as asexual, and this acronym tends to vary depending on the source. The plus sign (+) indicates the inclusion of all sexual and gender identities.

**Perceived as LGBTQT+:** Refers to someone who is treated as if they are LGBTQT+ even if they do not identify as such.

**Pronouns:** The words one uses to refer to themselves (e.g. he/him/his; she/her/hers; they/them/theirs; xe, xem, xyr, etc.)

**Queer:** An umbrella term (often used in place of the LGBTQT+ acronym) used to describe individuals who identify as being part of sexual and gender diverse communities (e.g. lesbian, gay, transgender).

**Sex:** A biological classification based on physical attributes such as sex chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive structures, and external genitalia. At birth, it is used to identify individuals as male or female. For those whose sex is not easily categorized as male or female see Intersex.

**Sexual Orientation:** Refers to a person’s attraction towards a particular gender or sex. Someone may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual, etc. It is important to remember that sexual identity and gender identity are separate.

**Trans\*:** (also Trans, Transgender, Transsexual) An umbrella term that can be used to describe people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what they were assigned at birth. Some trans\* people may choose to medically transition by taking hormones, having surgery. Some trans\* people may choose to socially transition by changing their name, clothing, hair, etc.

**Transphobia:** Fear, ignorance and mistreatment of people who are, or are perceived to be, trans\* or gender nonconforming. This often leads to bias, discrimination, hatred, harassment and violation of the human rights of transgender or gender nonconforming people. Transphobic bullying can also be targeted against any individual, regardless of perceived gender expression.

**Transition:** A term most commonly used to refer to someone transitioning from one gender to another. Transition often consists of a change in style of dress, selection of a new name, and a request that people use the correct pronoun when describing them. Transition may, but does not always, include medical care like hormone therapy, counseling, and/or surgery.

**Two-Spirit:** An Aboriginal term describing the embodiment of both masculine and feminine spirits. This identity is not limited to gender expression or sexuality, but encompasses them both while incorporating a spiritual element. It is a standalone identity, not an Aboriginal term for gay or lesbian.

(These definitions are adapted from Questions & Answers for Parents and Family Members of Gender Variant and Transgendered Youth {Vancouver School Board, 2011}.)

**Legal References:** The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; BC Human Rights Code; BC School Act; and the BC Vital Statistic Act (pending)

**Cross References:** ALA: Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism; FB: Facilities Planning; GBAB: Employment Equity; GBCBA: Sexual Harassment; IGBA: Programs for Disabled Students; IIA: Instructional Materials; IIAE: Hate Crimes and Propaganda; JB: Equal Educational Opportunities; KLB: Public Complaints about the Curriculum/Instructional Materials

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